

Registry for migrant workers

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A proposal that HAS NOT TAKEN OFF

Coimbatore's growing industrial activity has attracted a large number of workers from other States to the city.

It is home to thousands of workers from West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, and they are employed in sectors such as jewellery, construction, textiles, and engineering.

In the wake of increasing crimes and incidents such as arrest of a suspected IS sympathiser who had been a resident of Tirupur, the old plans to either register the workers or issue identity cards to them, which could not take off seem to be in discussion once again.

There are several workers from West Bengal-Bangladesh border areas.

Though only stray incidents of theft or loss of gold have been reported in the recent years, issue of identity cards to the workers will benefit the industry, the workers and the police.

The workers can be asked to register at the police stations in the jurisdiction of their workplace or residence.

In the case of a crisis, it will be easier to identify the suspect and protect the innocent, says a gold jewellery manufacturer in Coimbatore

However, the police differ. A police officer in the city points out that there were plans about 15 years ago to register workers when some of them had come to Coimbatore from Bangladesh to work in a particular sector.

However, legally there was no provision for the police to issue identity cards or take up any census of these workers.

It could even lead to fear or division among them.

This should not lead to issues such as complaints of discrimination based on race or linguistic identity, police officials pointed out.

Normally, workers from a particular State tend to stay with those or in the same area where those from that State reside.

Hence, even if there is a necessity, it should be possible to identify or collect information about a worker or a group of them.

According to City Police Commissioner A. Amalraj, the police recently collected details of tenants across the city and is trying to check if any of them have criminal records. However, there is no plan to register or issue identity cards for migrant workers, he says. The police say that it would be prudent if the employer and the house owner at their end exercise caution before hiring or engaging them for work or before renting out their premises.